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Chronica prophetica

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chronica prophetica

written by an anonymous Asturian court chronicler, 83

translated from the original Latin by

Kenneth Baxter Wolf



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Medieval Texts in Translation

This curious Latin chronicle was written in April 883 by an anonymous Christian historian close to the court of Alfonso III of Asturias (Spain). It contains lists of Christian and Muslim rulers in Spain, a highly pejorative "life of Muhammad" that depicts him as a quintessential false prophet, and lots of speculation about the End of Time, which the author sees as intimately tied to the demise of the Islamic emirate of Córdoba. The fact that Asturian armies at the time were taking advantage of Umayyad weakness and raiding deep into Muslim territory accounts for the overly optimistic estimates of the imminent Christian domination of the peninsula. A generation later, the tables would be turned with the accession of Abd ar-Rahman III, the greatest of the Andalusian rulers.*

Remember that the medieval Spanish "era" system of dating requires subtracting 38 years from the "era" dates to determine the corresponding "CE" year.

**This depiction of Muhammad is one of the earliest Latin (as opposed to Greek or Syriac) Christian depictions of Muhammad and Islam. There are three other extant versions as well as a reference to one other that we know was part of the library of the monastery of Leyre (Navarre) in the year 850. The anonymous author of the text was writing for a Christian audience with the intention of demonizing Islam and its founder. The Asturian editor who decided to include it in the Prophetic Chronicle no doubt figured it would help justify the much anticipated but ultimately fanciful victory of the Christian armies over the forces of the Cordoban Caliphate.*

HERE BEGIN THE SAYINGS OF THE PROPHET EZECHIEL, WHICH WE FIND IN THE
LIBRO PARITICINO.

The word of the Lord was made known to Ezekiel, saying: "Son of man, set your face against Ishmael and speak to them saying: 'I gave you power over other peoples, I multiplied you, I strengthened you, and put in your right hand a sword and in your left hand arrows so that you would destroy peoples and they would be leveled before your face like straw in the face of fire, and so that you would enter the land of Gog on foot and kill Gog with your sword and put your foot on his neck and make them slaves and tributaries to you. But because you forsook your Lord God I will turn you about, I will forsake you, and I will surrender you into the hand of Gog and in the territory of Libya you and all of your multitude will perish by his sword. Just as you did to Gog, so he will do to you. After you have held them in servitude for 170 years, Gog will in turn do to you what you did to him.'"

In era 249 the Goths left their region. After seventeen years, in era 266, they came into Spain and dominated it for 383 years. In era 753 they were expelled from their kingdom. The Goths and the Moors are descendents of Japheth. From Ham came Philistim and Nimrod who, after the flood, was the first to build the city of Babylon and excluded Asshur, son of Shem, from the land of Shinar. Then fleeing, Asshur built the cities of Ninevah and Boot. Abraham and his descendents were born from the line of Shem.

Certainly Gog is to be understood as the people of the Goths and just as Ishmael is written above to signify all of the race of the Ishmaelites when the prophet says, "Set your face against Ishmael," so Gog represents all of the people of the Goths. They took their name from the place of origin from whence they came. And the same chronicle of the Goths affirms that the people of the Goths came from Magog, when it says: The sons of Japheth claim to be the most ancient people of the Goths, whose origin is from Magog and claim to be named from the similarity of the last syllable," that is, Gog. And [there is more from the prophet Ezekiel tying it together. Because the prophet said to Ishmael: "You will enter the land of Gog on foot and you will kill Gog with your sword and you will make them slaves and tributaries to you." Now this is known to have come to pass. The land of Gog refers to Spain under the rule of the Goths, into which the Ishmaelites entered on account of the sins of the Gothic people and cut them down with the sword and made them tributaries, as it is clear in the present time.

The invasion of the Saracens into Spain [occurred] on the third day of the ides of November, era 752 [November 11, 714 CE] with Roderic ruling among the Goths, in the third year of his reign. We can determine the date of their invasion with certainty because everyone knows that they invaded in the third year of Roderic's rule. So that we may be certain which year it was, let us consult the Chronicle of the Goths where it says that Witiza was anointed in his kingship on the eighteenth day before the kalends of December, era 752 [November 14, 714 CE], from which time 170 years have passed up to today in era 921, the seventeenth year of Alfonso's rule in Oviedo. And we find Muhammad to be in the thirty-second year of his reign in Cordoba.

But the same prophet said again to Ishmael: "Because you forsook your Lord God, I will forsake you and surrender you to the hand of Gog and you and all your people will fall victim to his

sword. After you have afflicted them for 170 years, he will give retribution to you as you gave to him."

Christ is our hope that, when in the very near future, the 170 years have passed, the audacity of the enemy will be reduced to nothing and peace will be given to the holy church of Christ. The Saracens themselves have foreseen their destruction approaching in prodigies and signs in the stars, and have said that the kingdom of the Goths will be restored by our present prince. Also, this our prince, the glorious lord Alfonso, is foretold by the revelations and demonstrations of many Christians to be on the verge of ruling over all of Spain in the near future. Thus under the protection of divine clemency, the borders of the enemy shrink daily while the boundaries of the church of God grow. And to the extent to which the dignity of the name of Christ is fulfilled, the derisive calamity of the enemy wastes away.

HERE BEGINS [THE GENEALOGY] OF THE SARACENS

The Saracens perversely think themselves to be descended from Sarah. In truth, they are Agarenes from Hagar and Ishmaelites from Ishmael. This is their origin: Abraham bore Ishmael. Ishmael bore Quotede. Quotede bore Nabit. Nabit bore Alhumesca. Alhumesca bore Eldano. Eldano bore Munher. Munher bore Escicib. Escicib bore Iemen. Iemen bore Udad. Udad bore Adnan. Adnan bore Ma'add. Ma'add bore Nizar. Nizar bore Moldar. Moldar bore Indaf. Hindaf bore Mudrika. Mudrika bore Umeje. Umeje bore Kinana. Kinana bore Malik. Malik bore Fihir. Fihir bore Ghalib. Ghalib bore Luayy. Luayy bore Murra. Murra bore Kilab. Kilab bore Qusayy. Qusayy bore Abd al-Manaf. Abd al-Manaf bore two sons, Hashim and Abdiscemiz. Hisham bore Abd al-Muttalib. Abd al-Muttalib bore Abd Allah. Abd Allah bore Muhammad who is thought by them to be a prophet. Abdiscemiz, Hisham's brother, bore Umeje. Umeje bore Abolhaz. Abolhaz bore Haccam. Haccam bore Marwan [I, Umayyad caliph of Damascus]. Marwan bore Abd al-Malik. Abd al-Malik bore Hisham. Hisham bore Muawiya. Muawiya bore Abd ar-Rahman [I of Andalus], Abd ar-Rahman bore Hisham, Hisham bore al-Hakam, Al-Hakam bore Abd ar-Rahman [II]. Abd ar-Rahman bore Muhammad [I]. Muhammad bore al-Mundhir, and Abd Allah.

HISTORY OF MUHAMMAD

The heresiarch Muhammad rose up in the time of the emperor Heraclius, in the seventh year of his reign. At that time Bishop Isidore of Seville excelled in Catholic doctrine and Sisebut held the throne in Toledo. A church in honor of the blessed Euphrasius was built over his tomb in the town of Ildai [Andujar]. Furthermore in Toledo the church of the blessed Leocadia was enlarged with a high roof of wonderful workmanship by order of the aforementioned king. Muhammad's beginnings were these. As he was an orphan he was put under the charge of a certain widow. When, as an avaricious usurer, he traveled on business, he began assiduously to attend assemblies of Christians, and as a shrewd son of darkness, he began to commit some of the sermons of the Christians to memory and became the wisest among the irrational Arabs in all things. Aflame with the fuel of his lust, he was joined to his patroness by some barbaric law. Soon after, the spirit of error appeared to him in the form of a vulture and, exhibiting a golden mouth, said it was the angel Gabriel and ordered Muhammad to present himself among his people as a prophet. Swollen with pride, he began to preach to the irrational animals and he made

headway as if on the basis of reason so that they retreated from the cult of idols and adored the corporeal God in heaven. He ordered his believers to take up arms on his behalf, and, as if with a new zeal of faith, he ordered them to cut down their adversaries with the sword. God, with his inscrutable judgment (who once said through his prophet: "For behold I will raise up the Chaldeans, a bitter and swift people, wandering over the breadth of the earth, to possess the tents that are not their own, whose horses are swifter than evening wolves, and their appearance like the burning wind, reducing the land to emptiness as a demonstration to the faithful") permitted them to inflict injury. First they killed the brother of the emperor who held dominion over the land and in recognition of the triumph of victory, they established the Syrian city of Damascus as the capital of the kingdom. The same false prophet composed psalms from the mouths of irrational animals, commemorating a red calf. He wove a story of spider webs for catching flies. He composed certain sayings about the hoopoe and the frog so that the stench of the one might belch forth from his mouth and the babbling of the other might never cease from his lips. To season his error he arranged other songs in his own style in honor of Joseph, Zachary and even the mother of the Lord, Mary. And while he sweat in the great error of his prophecy, he lusted after the wife of a certain neighbor of his by the name of Zaid, and subjected her to his lust. Her husband, learning of the sin, shuddered and let her go to his prophet, whom he was not able to gainsay. In fact Muhammad noted it in his law as if from divine inspiration, saying: "When that woman was displeasing in the eyes of Zaid, and he repudiated her, he gave her to his prophet in marriage, which is an example to the others and to future followers wanting to do it that it be not sinful." After the commission of such a sin, the death of his soul and body approached simultaneously. Sensing his imminent destruction and knowing that he would in no way be resurrected on his own merit, he predicted that he would be revived on the third day by the angel Gabriel, who was in the habit of appearing to him in the guise of a vulture, as Muhammad himself said. When he gave up his soul to hell, they ordered his body to be guarded with an arduous vigil, anxious about the miracle which he had promised them. When on the third day they saw that he was rotting, and determined that he would not by any means be rising, they said the angels did not come because they were frightened by their presence. Having found sound advice--or so they thought--they left his body unguarded, and immediately instead of angels, dogs followed his stench and devoured his flank. Learning of the deed, they surrendered the rest of his body to the soil. And in vindication of this injury, they ordered dogs to be slaughtered every year so that they, who on his behalf deserved a worthy martyrdom here, might share in his merit there. It was appropriate that a prophet of this kind fill the stomachs of dogs, a prophet who committed not only his own soul, but those of many, to hell. Indeed he accomplished many sins of various kinds which are not recorded in this book. This much is written so that those reading will understand how much might have been written here.

THE REASON FOR THE INCURSION OF THE SARACENS INTO SPAIN

In the third year of the reign of Roderic over the Goths of Spain on the third day of the Ides of November in the year 752 era [November 11, 714 CE] the Saracens entered Spain. Walid, the amir almunin, son of Abd al-Malik, was ruling in Africa, in the hundredth year of the Arabs. The year in which Abu Zubra entered [Spain], his commander Muza remained in Africa and conquered the lands of the Moors. The next year, Tarik entered Spain. Three years after Tarik engaged in battle with Roderic, Musa ibn Nusayr invaded and destroyed the kingdom of the Goths. Concerning king Roderic, the cause of his death remains unknown up to the present day.

The Arabs took control of the region along with the kingdom. All of the beauty of the Gothic people perished through both panic and the sword because they had not performed appropriate penance for their sins. And because they forsook the precepts of the Lord and the laws of the sacred canons, the Lord forsook them so that they would no longer retain their beloved territory. And those who had always overcome enemy assaults aided by the right hand of the Lord, were laid low by the judgment of God. Overcome by so few, they were reduced to almost nothing, with many living in humiliation. The city of Toledo, victor of all peoples, succumbed as a victim to the triumphant Ishmaelites, and deserved to be subjected to them. Thus Spain was ruined for its disgusting sins, in the 380th year of the Goths.

CONCERNING THE GOTHs WHO REMAINED IN THE CITIES OF THE SPANIARDS

When the above-mentioned King Rodrigo of Spain, had been defeated and yet no one had found any evidence of him being killed, a messenger visited all the cities and fortifications of the Goths, instructing them to prepare themselves with arms for war and for seven years war raged violently between the Goths and the Saracens. After these seven years, messengers rushed about among them, imposing a firm pact and an immutable agreement: that they were to tear down all of the cities and inhabit fortifications and villages and all of the inhabitants of the land were to be assembled under the pact of their king and elect counts from their own regions. Each of the cities that they conquered were to be restricted to inhabitants from among their own people. Those people conquered were to become servants of arms (*servi armis*).

The aforementioned Musa ibn Nusayr entered Spain and ruled 1 year, 3 months

Abd al-Aziz ibn Musa ruled 2 years, 6 months.

Ayyub ruled 1 month.

Al-Hurr ibn Abd ar-Rahman ruled 2 years, 10 months.

As-Samh ibn Malik ruled 2 years, 9 months.

Abd ar-Rahman ibn Abd Allah ruled 1 month.

Udhrah, who was put in place of Ambasah, ruled 1 year, 1 month .

Yahya ibn Salamah ruled 2 years, 6 months.

Hudjifah ibn al-Ahwan ruled 6 months.

Uthman ibn Abu Nasah ruled 4 month.

Al-Haytham ruled 10 months.

Muhammad ibn Abd Allah al-Ashjai ruled 1 month.

Abd ar-Rahman ibn Abd Allah ruled 1 year, 10 months.

Abd al-Malik ibn Qatan ruled 2 years, 8 months.

Uqbah ibn al-Hajjaj ruled 4 years, 5 months.

Abd al-Malik ruled 1 year, 1 month.

Abu al-Khatar Husam ibn Dhirer ruled 1 month .

Thuabah ibn Yazid ruled 1 year.

These governors [duces] had short reigns with one succeeding the other, as designated by the Amir Almunin, who also terminated some by death. Their combined reigns lasted 27 years, 11 months.

Here are the kings who ruled in Spain who were from Banu Umayyad [Beni Umayyah] of the Ishmaelites.

Yusuf ruled 11 years [746-56 CE].

Abd ar-Rahman [I] ruled 33 years [756-788 CE].
Hisham [I] ruled 6 years, 6 months [788-96 CE].
Al-Hakam [I] ruled 32 years, 1 month 796-822 CE].
Abd ar-Rahman [II] ruled 32 years, 1 month [822-52 CE].
Muhammad [I] ruled 32 years [852-].

All of the [reigns of the] Arabs of Spain [add up to] 168 years, 5 months.

They [that is, the Saracens] will remain until St. Martin's Day, the third day of the Ides of November; in seven months they will have completed 169 years, and the one hundred seventieth year will have begun, the year when the Saracens will have completed [their allotted time], according to the above noted prediction of the prophet Ezechiel. [At that time] we expect vengeance against our enemies to come and the salvation of the Christians to begin. Omnipotent God commands this so that just as the unclean universe was deemed worthy to be ransomed from the power of the devil by the blood of His Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, so in the coming year he will order his church to be snatched from the yoke of the Ishmaelites. He who lives and rules forever and ever. Amen.

The Northmen [Lothomani] entered Spain in era 880 [842 CE] on the second day of the Kalends of August.

They came again later in era 896 [858 CE] in the month of July, and there was killing in Lisbon.

Era 751 [713 CE]. The Saracens conquered Spain before the time of Pelayo. They ruled the same for five years [before Pelayo's accession].

THE NAMES OF THE CATHOLIC KINGS OF LEON

Pelayo, the son of Vermudo, grandson of Rodrigo, king of Toledo. He accepted the kingship in era 756 and ruled for eighteen years, nine months, and nineteen days [718?-737 CE]. He was the first to enter into the rugged mountains under the cliff and cavern of Aguseba. From Pelayo up to era 966, under the rule of Alfonso, son of Ordone, are 211 years.

Fafila, his son, ruled 2 years, 7 months, and 10 days [737-39 CE].

Alfonso [I], son-in-law of Pelayo, ruled 19 years, 1 month, and 2 days [739-57 CE].

Fruela [I], his brother, ruled 12 years, 6 months, and 20 days [757-68 CE].

Aurelio ruled 6 years, 6 months [768-74 CE].

Silo ruled 9 years, one month [774-83 CE].

Mauregato ruled 5 years, 6 months [783-88 CE].

Vermudo [I] ruled 2 years, 6 months. [788-91 CE].

After lord Aurelius, Alfonso [II] the Great and Chaste, who founded Oviedo, ruled 51 years, 5 months, and 16 days [791-842 CE].

Then Nepotianus, kinsman of Alfonso ruled [] years [842 CE].

Afterward, Ramiro [I] ruled for 7 years, 9 months, 19 days [842-50 CE].

Ordone [I], his son, ruled 16 years, 3 months, and one day [850-66 CE]. He attacked Albailda.

Alfonso [III], son of Ordone, accepted the kingship on the second day of the Ides of February, era 964. He ruled 44 years, 8 months [866-910 CE]. This one destroyed Ebrellos.

Garcia, son of Alfonso, ruled 3 years [910-14 CE].

Ordono [II] ruled 8 years, 2 months [914-24 CE].

Fruela [II], his brother, ruled 1 year, 7 months [924-25 CE].

Alfonso [IV], son of Fruela, ruled 5 years, 10 months [925-30 CE].

Sancho, son of Ordono, ruled [] year.

After that, Alfonso gave up his rule and turned to the Lord.

Ramiro, brother of Alfonso, became king on the eighth day of the Ides of November, era [] [930 CE].